Religious Extremism and Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Secondary and Higher Secondary Education in Bangladesh

Building New Constituencies for Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR): Interlinkages Between Religion and SRHR

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NATIONAL REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS
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AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome		LMP	Last menstrual period
ARROW	Asia-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women		MDG	Millennium Development Goals
			MOE	Ministry of Education
CSRHRE	Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Education		MNCS	Maternal and New-born Child Survival
			MR	Menstruation Regulation
DfID	Department for International Development		NAC	National AIDS Committee
DSHE	Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education		NCC	National Curriculum Coordination Committee
			NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands		NGO	Non-Government Organization
EU	European Union		NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion		SATP	South Asian Terrorism Portal
FWV	Family Welfare Visitor		SIDA	Swedish Development Agency
GBV	Gender-based Violence		SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
GDP	Gross Domestic Product		SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus		STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
HuJI	Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islam		UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development		UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Commission
INGO	International Non-Government Organization		UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
JMB	Jama'at-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh		VAW	Violence against Women
KII	Key Informant Interview		VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender			

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bangladesh, with its ambitious development goals and many challenges faces several socio-economic issues, including the welfare of its youth population. Although Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country, the constitution of Bangladesh proclaims secularism to be one of the four fundamental principles of state policy. More recently, the country has been facing increasing incidences of religious extremism that in turn have been influencing the development of policies.

This research investigates whether religious extremism plays a role in the inclusion or exclusion of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (CSRHR) education in the secondary and higher secondary education system in Bangladesh. It also explores associations that religious extremism[1] may have with the teaching, learning and implementing of such education.

The research, of qualitative nature, was based on the review of textbooks, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with parents and students in schools under the general education system and in madrasahs. Confidentiality was maintained and outputs were analysed using the software Atlas Ti. There were several limitations faced in conducting the research that included getting the research approved by the NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB), national strikes leading to school closures, and some schools not allowing the team to discuss "sensitive" issues created hindrances.

Bangladesh issued textbooks with CSRHR education largely based on language, cultural sensitivity and age specific information in 2013. There were reports in the media of parents, students and teachers terming the inclusion of sex education in the curriculum an "embarrassing" topic to put forward for discussion. Some parents cited openly discussing sex education as a potential cause for increased rape and sexual harassment. There were complaints to the Ministry to remove the chapters on CSRHRE from the textbooks. The Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board[2] edited the books, claiming to make them more age-specific and distributed it to students later in 2014. The 2015 textbooks stress on cleanliness and asking parents what to do in the onset of puberty, using connotations of purity in the religious sense. Furthermore, excerpts from textbooks on sexual harassment focus more on protective measures and not attracting the opposite sex than actually promoting gender equality. The textbooks also state that activities such as watching pornographic materials are considered a threat to society. Madrasah Board textbooks state that pre-marital or same-sex sexual intercourse, as well as the performance of prayers during menstruation, ejaculation and sexual intercourse, is prohibited. The books validate sexual intercourse only between the husband and wife. Extreme rigidity pertaining to how one should behave in Islam is promoted and promoting free discussion and information on HIV/AIDS is limited.

Sex education in the country is mostly viewed in a negative light, highlighting the aspects of teen pregnancies, diseases, abuse and violence. The textbooks do not cover emotional

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1   In this research, religious extremism is defined as: "Rigid interpretations of religion that are forced upon others using social or economic coercion, laws, intolerance, or violence. It is accompanied by non-fluid definitions of culture, religion, nationalism, ethnicity or sect, which move citizens into exclusionary, patriarchal and intolerant communities" (ICAN and AWID (2014) as reported in "An Advocacy Brief: Post-2015 Development Agenda: Influences of Religious

Fundamentalism on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women").

2   The Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board or the "Alia Madrasah Education Board" was established in 1979. The Board provides permission/ recognition/renewal of Dakhil (S.S.C level) and Alim (H.S.C level) levels according government regulations. Madrasah refers to an institution specially designed for Islamic religious and cultural education.

aspects of relationships and gender analysis in a socioeconomic and cultural context. Reproductive health issues are widely considered women's issues and learning is limited to women only.

The low rate of attainment of secondary education is alarming and reflects the lack of access to education. The youth suffer from negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes. The type of information they have access to is limited and they lack the tools to make informed choices. Despite policies of promoting effective SRH education, the outreach of policies is low. The context of CSRHR education is influenced by societal and religious interpretations posing a limited point of view and not making much impact overall. Findings also suggest that adults view the young as passive beings in need of information and teaching to lead a certain accepted way of life and that teachers and parents need teaching guidance in tackling their own perceptions and views on the subject at hand. In Madrasahs, there is general reluctance to discuss sexuality with students. Further, parents' views of sexuality and related issues can differ from that of the institutional stakeholders and opposing viewpoints can be difficult to manage in providing information.

Incorporating CSRHR education in the national curriculum is challenged by socio-cultural and religious taboos on sexuality as interpretations affect not only the material but also the teaching methods and accessibility of CSRHR education in all mediums.

A comprehensive sexual and reproductive health rights education curriculum for the students must be concerned with content, classroom learning strategies, teacher training, and the establishment of more collaborative working relationships between the various stakeholders of curriculum, including teachers, students and the community. A comprehensive SRHR education can play an extremely important role in advancing gender equality and ensure that young people have access to accurate information on CSRHR. Although a number of socio-cultural issues exist, it does not mean that CSRHR education for adolescents would be impossible. To make this possible, there is a need to

work at policy, programme and advocacy levels and make such education rights based, rather than allowing for the influence of religious interpretations and related cultural practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

There has been some progress in Bangladesh in primary school enrolment of boys and girls; enrolment rates have increased (Government of Bangladesh 2014). In 2009 the 5-year primary school cycle completion rate was only 50.7 per cent, despite primary education being free and compulsory as per the Primary Education Compulsory Act 1990. Poor quality of education, lack of equal access to education and high dropout rates continue to make school access limited for many young people, especially girls. In 2009, an estimated 3.3 million children were out of school in Bangladesh (UNICEF 2009).[3] The youth population (10–24 years old), including adolescents comprise one-third of the country's population—48 million (UNFPA 2014). The lack of access to quality primary and secondary education is affecting the ability of Bangladesh's youth population to reach its potential. Although the youth population is considered to be a critical group in terms of Bangladesh's development agenda and its attempts to become a middle-income country by 2021, they continue to be left out and ill-equipped to tackle challenges.

Young people also suffer from negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes (BDHS 2014). Attitudes towards the type of information and access to sexual and reproductive health services young people can have limits their rights and ability to make informed decisions about their lives. According to UNESCO[4], Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) provides young people with the knowledge, skills and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle. The definition views "sexuality" within the context of emotional and social development, recognizing that the provision of information alone is not enough and that young people need to be given the opportunity to acquire essential life skills and develop positive attitudes and values. However, barriers to adequate CSE for young people remain, not just in Bangladesh but also in many other countries in the region.

Technical documents produced on CSE (UNESCO 2009, SEICUS 2009 and UNFPA 2014 a and b) call for action around a range of dimensions to ensure holistic action that uses human rights and gender sensitive approaches that are implemented in schools and out of schools. Young people (defined as people between the ages of 10–24 years) should be provided with age-appropriate, culturally relevant and medically/scientifically accurate information. Opportunities for young people to develop attitudes and values to make decisions and gain life skills would help them make informed choices about their lives. Such an approach would equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that would enable the development of positive views of sexuality, in relation to their emotional and social development. At the same time, service provision should take this rights-based focus, providing non-discriminatory, non-judgemental services to help young people understand their sexuality and protect them from unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and subsequent risk of infertility. It can help preventative

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[3] UNICEF Brief –
http://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Quality_Primary_Education(1).pdf

[4] Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sex and relationships by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgemental information. Sexuality education provides opportunities to explore one's own values and attitudes and to build decision-making,

communication and risk reduction skills about many aspects of sexuality. The term comprehensive emphasizes an approach to sexuality education that encompasses the full range of information, skills and values to enable young people to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights and to make decisions about their health and sexuality –
http://www.unesco.org/new/en/hiv-and-aids/our-priorities-in-hiv/sexuality-education/

measures for HIV/AIDS and other STIs, unintended pregnancy, coercive or abusive sexual activity and exploitation because people have access to the information that can help them deal with these situations and conditions. It can help counter the negative impact that cultural values and religious beliefs have on understanding of issues and help manage relationships with their parents, teachers, other adults and their communities.

These encompass a set of principles that must always be present in programmes and curricula: respect for human rights and diversity, with sex education considered a right, ensuring critical thinking, strengthening capacities and participation of young people in decision making, promotion of norms and attitudes of gender equality and inclusion, addressing vulnerability and exclusion, ownership and cultural relevance and a life-cycle approach (UNFPA 2014a).

The human rights focus of sexuality education is enshrined in international agreements, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNFPA 2014a). Bangladesh has signed onto all these international conventions and is bound to provide timely and relevant sexuality education to young people.

In recent times, Bangladesh has seen a rising influence of extremist ideologies and groups who are trying to use a strict interpretation of Islam to influence decisions and rights. This influence has come from greater exposure to the Islamic practices in the Middle East as well as continuous exposure to radical groups in the region. This is evident in the rise of systemic abuse of rights of minorities, limiting rights of secular Muslims and women, and brutal killings of atheists and sexual rights activists in recent times.[5]

At the same time, the Constitution of Bangladesh[6] declares secularism as one of the four fundamental principles of state policy (Part 2.8), while also stating that it shall be realised through the elimination of communalism in all forms, favouritism of religion in politics, abuse of religion for political purposes, and discrimination as a result of religious practice (Preamble and Part 2.12). It establishes Islam as the state religion (2A) while it gives equal status and equal right to practice other religions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity.[7]

This research builds on the UNESCO definition of CSE, and further defines comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights[8] education (CSRHR) as an age-appropriate, culturally relevant approach to teaching about sexual and reproductive health rights by providing scientifically accurate, realistic, non-judgmental information. The term comprehensive encompasses the full range of information, skills and values to enable young people to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights and to make decisions about their health and sexuality.

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5 Rise of extremism and nationalism in Bangladesh. http://apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/ReligiousRadicalism/ PagesfromReligiousRadicalismandSecurityinSouthAsiach17.pdf

6 Constitution of Bangladesh - https://www.constituteproject.org/ constitution/Bangladesh_2011.pdf

7 In 2010, the High Court held up the secular principles of the 1972 Constitution – see http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-148678. The High Court also strengthened its stance against punishments by Islamic edict (fatwa), following complaints of brutal sentences carried out against women by extra-legal village courts. See http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/bangladeshi-court-outl aws-fatwa-punishments-2024229.html

8 This research adopts UNESCO's definition of comprehensive sexuality education.

9 In this research, religion extremism is defined as: 'Rigid' interpretations of religion that are forced upon others using social or economic coercion, laws, intolerance, or violence. It is accompanied by non-fluid definitions of culture, religion, nationalism, ethnicity or sect, which move citizens into exclusionary, patriarchal and intolerant communities (ICAN and AWID 2014 in "An Advocacy Brief: Post-2015 Development Agenda. Influences of Religious Fundamentalism on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women").

Research Objectives

This research explores if religious extremism plays any role in the inclusion or exclusion of CSRHR in the secondary and higher secondary education system. It also explores associations that religious extremism[9] may have with teaching, learning and implementing such education.

Research Questions

- What do we mean by comprehensive SRHR education in the Bangladeshi context?

- Does religious extremism influence comprehensive SRHR education in secondary and higher secondary education, particularly in relation to the formulation of the curriculum, syllabus, and writing the textbooks and its implementation?

Research Methodology

The research was carried out from October 2014 to March 2015 using a qualitative approach and attempted to capture heterogeneous characteristics to the extent possible using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with students and parents,along with a review of textbooks[10].

The Delphi technique[11] was used to develop a consensus about topics that should be covered for imparting SRHR knowledge in different grades of secondary and higher secondary general and Madrasah education. Confidentiality

was maintained as an ethical consideration; written consent from adult respondents and verbal consent from students were received.

Limitations

Getting approval for the research from the Non-Governmental Organizations Affairs Bureau (NGOAB) took several months[12]. When this was received it was the end of the school year for general and Madrasah education[13] and the research team faced further delays to obtain the relevant textbooks for 2015 to be included in the review. A national strike in January 2015 resulted in schools being closed for longer than expected. This hampered data collection, as the team was not able to reach all schools as intended. Some institutions did not provide the necessary permission to the team to hold the FGDs with the students, citing that the issue was too sensitive and that parents would not provide the required authorisation.

Despite the objectives of the research, ground level sensitivities regarding SRHR have to be noted. Words like "sex", "sexual health", and "sexuality" are not commonly used for communication with government or any educational institutions. In addition, terminology related to religion including religious extremism is sensitive. Coupled together, this posed more challenges in getting necessary authorisation and in collecting data. Naripokkho, used a shorter project title—Building New Constituencies for Women's Reproductive Health and Rights—for official communication and approval (such as, application for

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[10] In general education, the textbooks titled: Physical Education and Health, Home Science, General Science, Biology, and Bangladesh and World Exposure, and in the Madrasah Education, three more religious textbooks, "Aqayed and Fiqh", "Hadith Sharif", and "Qura'n Majid and Tajweed" were reviewed and coded. The Policies and Strategies, curriculum of the General Education and Madrasah Education, and books containing SRHR and life skills of different NGOs and UNICEF for their adolescent groups were also reviewed.

[11] The Delphi Method is a structured communication technique which relies on a panel of experts. In the standard version, the experts answer questionnaires in two or more rounds. The experts are then encouraged to revise their earlier answers in light of the replies of other members of their panel. Finally, the process ends after a

pre-defined stop criterion (e.g. number of rounds, achievement of consensus, and stability of results) and the mean or median scores of the final rounds determine the results. See Rowe and Wright (1999): The Delphi technique as a forecasting tool: issues and analysis. International Journal of Forecasting, Volume 15, Issue 4, October 1999.

[12] This is a set up in the Prime Minister's office. NGOAB has focus of oversight for NGOs which were supported by foreign funds. Naripokkho applied in August 2014 and got the approval in the third week of October 2014.

[13] The education year of General and Madrasah Education is January to December. For English Medium (Cambridge and Edexcel), it is late August to late May.

Table 1: Data Collection Methods and Summary of Respondents

Respondents					
Adolescent girl students in general education	6/ 11-12	4	-	-	-
Adolescent girl students in Madrasah education	7/12-13	3	-	-	-
Adolescent boy students in general education	8/13-14	6		-	-
Adolescent boy students in Madrasah education	9 to 10/ 14-16	3		-	-
Teachers in general education	11 to 12/ 16-18	1	3	-	-
Teachers in Madrasah education		1	3	-	-
Writers/authors in general education text books		-	3	-	-
Writers/authors in Madrasah education text books		-	4	-	-
Mothers of general education		2	-	-	-
NGO/INGO/UN representatives		-	8	-	-
Educationists, researchers, scholars		-	9	-	-
NCTB		-	6	-	-
Curriculum Specialist		-	3	-	-
Representatives from MOE, DSHE, General Education Board, Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board		-	4	-	-
Text book in general education		-	-	35	-
Text book in Madrasah education		-	-	28	-
Text book in the English Medium				17	
Workshop		-	-	-	1
Total		**20**	**43**	**80**	**1**

appointment, consent form for group discussions, NGO Affairs Bureau etc.).

The structure of the report is as follows: Section 1 includes an overview, objectives of global and national research, research questions, methodology and limitations, Section 2 includes a profile of Bangladesh focusing on SRHR and religious fundamentalism, Section 3 presents the interlinkages, focusing on sharing the research findings, Section 4 and 5 include the conclusions and the recommendations respectively. The report has appendices that include a glossary of key terms, background to the education system in Bangladesh, data collection guides, a list of interviews conducted, and the list of textbooks that were reviewed.

The outputs of the book reviews, KIIs, and FGDs was analysed using the software Atlas Ti.

2. PROFILING BANGLADESH: SRHR AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

A Profile: Bangladesh	
Total population (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011)	149.77 million
Official languages	Bengali
Literacy rate among the population 10 years old and over (2010) (Ministry of Planning 2011)	67.4%
Literacy rate among females aged 10 years and over (2010) (Ministry of Planning 2011)	70.6%
Literacy rate among males aged 10 years and over (2010) (Ministry of Planning 2011)	64.5%
Gross National Income per capita (2013) (UNSD 2016)	US$ 1059.1
Population growth rate (1960–2010) (Worldometers 2016)	1960–2.9%, 1970–2.6%, 1980–2.8%, 1990–2.5%, 2000–1.97%, 2010–1.14%
Labour force participation rate (2010) (Ministry of Planning 2011)	59.3% (2010)
Form of government	Federal Republic
Autonomous Local Government Units (as of June 2015)	Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad, Paurashava, City Corporation, and Zilla Parishad
Maternal mortality ratio (2015) (World Bank 2016)	176
Total fertility rate(2014) (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 2015)	2.2 per cent
Adolescent (15-19 age group) fertility rate (2014) (World Bank 2016)	83 per cent
HIV average annual growth rate (among Men having Sex with Men) (2003)	<0.2
(UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO 2004)	

Sources: Stated in the table.

According to the World Bank (2014), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was US$ 954 in 2006-2010, with a growth of 6 per cent over the past decade despite political instability, poor infrastructure, insufficient electric power supplies, natural disasters, and the slow implementation of economic reforms needed to liberalise the economy. The dollar per day poverty rate has also declined from 56.7 per cent in 1991–92 to 31.5 per cent in 2010.

Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary level education and some improvement in infant and under-five mortality and maternal mortality rates, immunization coverage and incidence of communicable diseases (Government of Bangladesh 2013). Bangladesh is ranked 112 out of 146 in Gender Inequality Index for 2011 (UNDP 2011).

Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and Young People

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) in Bangladesh is limited. While gains have been made for instance in maternal, neonatal and children's health and family planning, there are considerable gaps and unmet needs for women and girls in the country (Campaign for Popular Education 2014).

The country has a history of high maternal mortality[14], although it has been on the decline, from 322 in 2001 to 194 in 2010 (BMMS 2011). After a decade-long (1993/1994 to 2000) plateau in fertility—3.3 children per woman—there has also been a decline in the total fertility rate to 2.3 births per woman. More than half (52 per cent) of the women population use modern contraceptives, however, 14 per cent of currently married women have an unmet need for family planning services; 8 per cent for limiting and 5 per cent for spacing of births. Sixty-two per cent (BDHS 2014) of births take place at home, attended by traditional birth attendants without any formal training, and are not connected to or supported by the health system. Trained medical professionals attend only 37 per cent of births which take place in a health facility, and about 63 per cent of deliveries take place at home (BDHS 2014).

Despite the gains in maternal mortality, the effects of this trends on younger women is concerning. This is also linked to high incidences of early child marriages and forced marriages in the country. According to the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1984 Amendment Ordinance) the minimum age of marriage registration is 18 years for women and 21 years for men. However, 64 per cent of all women aged 20–24 were married before the age of 18[15] and two per cent of women are married before the age of 11 (UNFPA 2013).

About one-third of girls also begin childbearing before they turn 20, resulting in high adolescent birth rates. Thirty-one per cent of adolescent girls aged 15–19 are already mothers with at least one child, and six per cent are currently pregnant. The perinatal mortality rate is 50 deaths per 1000 pregnancies and this is high among teenage mothers and mothers of age 40–49 years (BDHS 2014). Girls marry and are expected to give birth within the first year of marriage and have low use of effective contraception methods. Adolescent mothers are significantly more likely to suffer from birthing complications than adult women.

Low nutrition amongst pregnant and new mothers, infections during pregnancy, anaemia and repeated pregnancies contribute to low birth weight babies and maternal mortality. Moreover, 14 per cent of pregnant women's deaths are associated with violence and injuries[16]. While women and men lack access to adequate health services, these are even more restricted for unmarried adolescents together with the lack of access to information, including information on STIs.

Abortion is illegal in Bangladesh unless it is done to save the mother's life. Menstrual Regulation (MR)[17] is allowed within 10 weeks of pregnancy. Knowledge of this practice is also high amongst married women; seven in ten women who have been married are aware of the practice. In 2010, an estimated 653,000 women obtained MR provided by a range of service providers including NGOs and private sector (28 and 9 per cent respectively) (BDHS 2014).

Women are not able to make their own decisions regarding their health, including those decisions related to their SRH. For adolescents and young people, this decision-making is even more constrained and conditional. Young people are

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[14] According to first MDG Progress Report, it was 574 per 100,000 live births in 1990.

[15] The actual age of the individuals is concealed when marriage of a girl below 18 years takes place. The marriage registrars usually confirm the age by looking at the birth certificate. But in reality, in most of the cases the girl's age is raised and a fake birth certificate is prepared. Hence, under-aged marriages remain undetected.

[16] Asia Pacific Human Rights Information Centre http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2005/06/violence-against-women- bangladesh-context.html

[17] A procedure that uses manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) to safely establish non-pregnancy after a missed period. https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/menstrual-regulation-and-induced-abortion-bangladesh``

unable to access SRH associated care and information and have to get parental consent to access certain services, and this adds further barriers (Narripokkho, undated).

The rate of adolescent girls, who have experienced violence, including sexual violence, is 47 per cent. Many (as high as four in ten) girls are convinced that wife beating is sometimes justifiable (UNICEF 2014). Currently there is no dedicated policy or strategy to prevent sexual harassment except the High Court Division of the Supreme Court issuing a set of guidelines on May 13, 2009 defining sexual delinquency to prevent any kind of physical, mental or sexual harassment of women, girls and children at their workplaces, educational institutions and other public places including roads across the country.

HIV/AIDS prevalence and knowledge rates are both low. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS is currently less than 0.1 per cent (BDHS 2014). Only 17.7 per cent of people aged 15–24 years have comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV (BDHS 2014).

Considering some of these factors, there is a dire need to improve access to adolescent friendly SRH services among adolescents irrespective of marital status, focusing on rural and urban access in a timely manner.

Despite several attempts and initiatives, there is no single policy or strategy document issued by the government on SRHR. Instead, elements of SRH are captured in various policies such as the National Population Policy (2010)[18],

Health Policy (2011)[19], Maternal Health Strategy 2011-2016, Integrated National Policy on HIV/AIDs and STI-related Issues and Adolescents Reproductive Health Policy 2006. The National Population Policy 2010 is targeted towards population control, not on empowering the population to exercise their right to make decisions regarding their health, fertility and wellbeing. Similarly, the Health Policy 2011 is quite comprehensive but does not address the issues of sexuality as a whole. The government approved Adolescent Reproductive Health Strategy (2006) covers empowerment of young people between ages 10–19 years, their decision-making capacity and negotiation skills, and sexuality education in the school curriculum. Bangladesh's National Youth Policy (2003) simply states, "A special initiative will be undertaken to give concrete ideas to adolescents and related people on adolescence reproductive health". This statement does not specifically refer to education and no further guidance is given in the policy. Similarly, co-habitation (living together without being married), premarital sex, sexual diversity are all criminalised and considered unacceptable socially.[20]

Despite attempts to include sex education in the curriculum, outreach to young people including adolescents, is limited. Formal education and the secondary school curriculum offer little knowledge about HIV/AIDS and the biology of human reproduction as they do not have the desired elements of sex education as voiced in policies (Bhuiyan 2014).

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[18] Bangladesh Population Policy (2012) http://www.mohfw.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=85&Itemid=&lang=en

[19] Bangladesh Health Policy 2011 http://mohfw.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=1475&lang=en

[20] According to the Penal Code, 1860 Section 377 "Unnatural Offences," "Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with man, woman, or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, and shall also be liable to fine. A report published by the Bangladesh Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs states that Section 377 "violates [the]

constitutionally protected right to privacy under the expanded definition of right to life and personal liberty [...]." To improve the legal status of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, in 2009, the UNHRC recommended the Government of Bangladesh (1) to decriminalise same-sex relationships by abolishing Section 377 of the Bangladesh Penal Code, (2) to educate law enforcers and judicial officers about LGBT issues, and (3) to adopt further measures to ensure the protection of LGBT persons against violence and abuse. The government accepted the UNHRC recommendation of training law enforcers to protect sexual and gender minorities. The first two recommendations were rejected on the basis that "Bangladesh is a society with strong traditional and cultural values. Same-sex activity is not an acceptable norm to any community in the country." (UPR 2009).

Education System in Bangladesh[21]

Primary education is free and compulsory as per the Primary Education Compulsory Act of 1990. Constitutionally, education is identified as a basic right and to be ensured by the state for all. Primary school participation rates between 2008–2012 were 94 per cent. Forty-three per cent of boys and 51 per cent of girls participated in secondary school during the same period (UNICEF 2013). Attainment rates (completion) has been much lower; 21 per cent for boys and 16 per cent for girls (USAID, undated).

The education system of Bangladesh (detail in Annexure 2 and in the Figure 1) is broadly divided into three major stages: primary, secondary and tertiary education. Primary education in Bangladesh spans grades one to five, and falls under the purview of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). The first level of education comprises five years of formal schooling (class/grades one to five). Education, at this stage, normally begins at six+ years of age up to 11 years. While most primary school children study in government and registered non-government schools, there is a significant share of NGOs, non-registered Madrasahs and other institutions such as pre-schools attached to English medium schools. Secondary education (junior, secondary and higher secondary levels) in Bangladesh spans grades six to ten, and is under the purview of the Ministry of Education (MOE). This comprises seven years of formal schooling. There is diversification of courses after three years of schooling in junior secondary level. Vocational and technical courses are offered in vocational and trade institutes/schools and vocational courses have also been introduced in some high schools. Bangladesh has pursued a service delivery strategy in the secondary education sector, which combines a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model by combining public financing with private provision.

Figure 1: Education System in Bangladesh
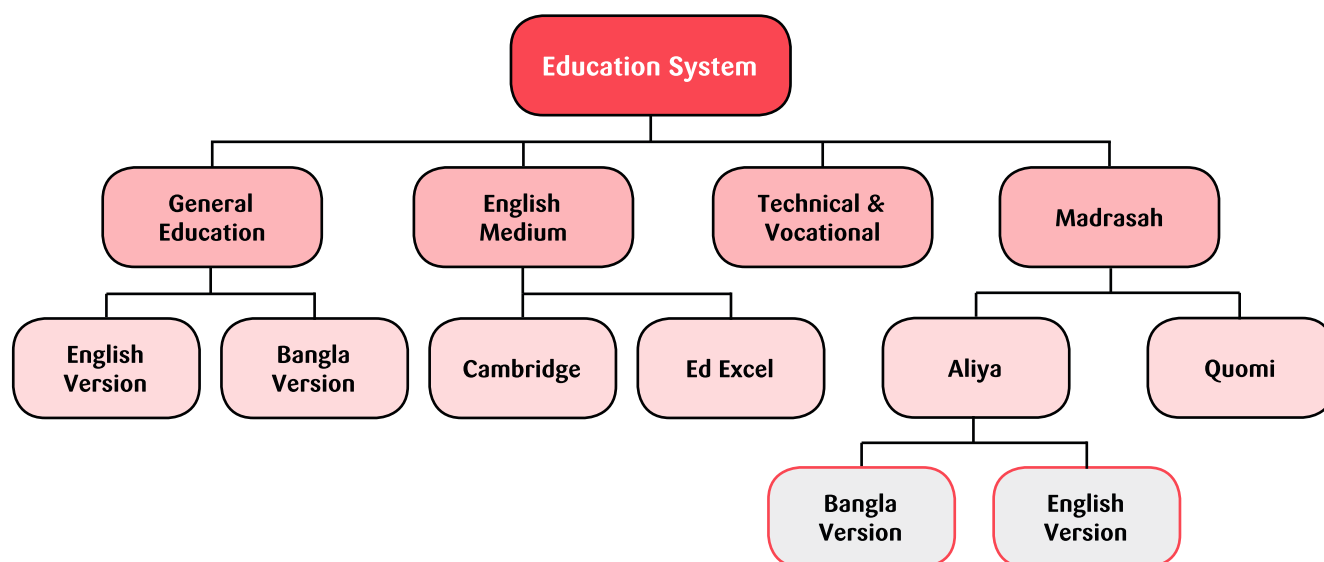
Source: Compiled by research team from information gathered from the Ministry of Education website (www.moedu.gov.bd, 2015).

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[21] This section draws from the Concept Note developed for the study by Naripokkho and the Annex on Education in this report.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is an autonomous organization under the MOE. It is responsible for the renewal/modification and development of the curriculum, as well as the production and distribution of textbooks at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

Religious schools in Bangladesh are almost entirely in the non-state sector, operating in both primary and secondary levels. Madrasahs operating at primary or secondary levels in Bangladesh are classified in two broad categories: Aliya Madrasahs and Quomi Madrasahs. Outside the primary/secondary sector, there is a large number of pre-primary Islamic education institutions which are of two types: Maktab (or Nourani Madrasah) and Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs. While 81 per cent of the share of secondary enrolment is in secular non-government schools (henceforth referred to as schools), 17 per cent of the enrolment share is in registered reformed non-government Madrasahs. The establishment of Aliya Madrasahs and their activities follow government regulations as prescribed by the Madrasah Education Board. The Board approves curriculum for all registered Madrasahs from primary (i.e. Ebtidai) to master's (i.e. Kamil) level. In terms of curriculum content, Aliya Madrasahs offer a hybrid education where students are taught both religious education and general education. Students in government recognised schools (i.e. affiliated to the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board) are taught subjects similar to those taught in general education primary schools in addition to a curriculum of religious and Arabic studies.

The secondary level of the Aliya stream is known as Dakhil, which spans grades 6 to 10. Similar to mainstream education system, students appear in a public examination at the end of Dakhil education, which is organized by the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. The DakhilCertificate is equivalent to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC). The Quomi Madrasahs operate completely outside the state sector. The final stage of the Quomi Madrasah education is called Dawrah Hadith, in which Hadith Certificates are awarded to the students after successful completion of the "Dawrah" class. This is popularly perceived as being

equivalent to a Kamil degree in Aliya Madrasahs. Despite this, Quomi Madsara gets treated as one of the most un-known (academic) systems in the education sector.

Links between Education, SRHR, and Religious Issues

Links between education and SRHR are mutually supporting. SRHR is linked to achieving universal access to education, and to combating early marriage and pregnancy, as well as HIV and AIDS and other SRH issues that prevent young people from attending school (UNFPA 2012). Therefore, comprehensive sexuality education is critical for empowering young people. They will also contribute to achieving universal access to education, especially secondary school, by allowing girls to choose to avoid, plan and space their pregnancies. In the long run, this enables women to determine the timing and spacing of their pregnancies and allows them to take advantage of opportunities for education and employment (Kirby, Obasi and Laris 2006).

Despite the religious and cultural norms and taboos, the young and adolescents are often exposed to sex before marriages thus becoming vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies. Within different religious and secular traditions, positions on sex are extremely varied. Since different cultures and religions have different ways of looking into things, accepting the fact that communities are neatly bounded may assist to resolve rigidities between diverse communities (Butler 2008).

The Ministry of Education is in charge of ensuring secondary and higher secondary education and of developing the curriculum (from grade six onwards except in the English medium where the British Council is responsible for this worldwide). NCTB has a predominantly "government-developed" or "government–approved" curriculum decision-making and development process. The current curriculum is based on values and philosophies of the National Education Policy 20 10[22] that are congruent with content and pedagogy.

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22 Member, National Curriculum Committee.

The reviewed literature showcases three arguments on why CSRHR education is relevant and how it should be provided (Farelly et al. 2007): Firstly, the cultural preservation perspective; secondly, the risk minimisation perspective; and thirdly, the view that sexual expression should enable cultural and individual enlightenment and emancipation.[23] Each of these discourses assumes that individuals will engage in particular practices based on appropriate knowledge or absence of knowledge, which will secure or prevent desirable experiences, feelings and behaviour. It also implies how CSRHR education should be provided, including content, teaching and learning methods, and desirable outcomes.

Diverse opinions[24] exist regarding the impact and efficacy of the role of education in contributing to young people's CSRHR and point to several important socio-economic, cultural, and political issues, e.g. poverty, employment, access to health care and social justice (Braeken and Cardinal 2008). Therefore, comprehensive SRHR education is critical for empowering young people particularly girls. As a result, this allows them, specifically young women, to take advantage of opportunities for education and employment (Kirby, Obasiand Laris 2006). The desired outcomes of sexuality education often depend on the type of educational programme and the approach on which it is based, e.g. morality, health or rights-based (Braeken and Cardinal 2008).

Religious Arguments For or Opposing CSRHR

The discussion, teaching and learning about sex, sexuality and sexual health, are not taboo or opposed in Islam. This is not only desirable in Islam, but obligatory upon every

Muslim (Al-Afendi 1980). The teachings from the Qur'an and Hadith are rich sources of information which invite debate on sexual health issues (Mabud 1998). Education regarding sexual health in Islam is considered part of the religious upbringing of a child (Ashraf 1998; Mabud 1998; Noibi 1998; Sarwar 1996) and centres around the religious concepts of unity (tawhid) and worship (ibadah).The holy Quran and Hadith have specific instructions on family planning (such as using "withdrawal method"), breastfeeding (specific Hadith on the importance of it), and birth spacing. It is also the view that sexual health instructions and materials must not offend the Islamic principle of decency and modesty. One of the main aims of sex education programmes is to reduce guilt, embarrassment and anxiety (Reissand Mabud 1998; Halstead 1997). While these aims are considered a requirement, from a religious perspective for Muslims, such a goal might lead to certain classroom practices that would affect the modesty of students (Halstead 1997).

Research in different countries indicate the challenges faced when attempting SRHR education within educational institutions. Sanjakdar (2005) reports of teachers in an Islamic College in Australia being challenged by the restrictive curriculum structures, policies and practices. They also struggled with embedded cultural understandings and traditions of students, which contradict Islamic teachings, principles and beliefs as stated in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. These teachers not only made an Islamic perspective to sexual health education curriculum a reality at their school, they confronted long-standing political issues and hegemonic structures, enabling the search for a solution to a curriculum problem and constructed the conditions necessary for its sustainability.

Pokharel et al. (2006) found that adolescents in surveyed schools in a district of Nepal did not appear to be getting the information they needed on SRH. Most of the teachers did not want to teach sensitive topics and feared censure by their colleagues and society. Some lacked the skills to give such instructions. Many students also felt uncomfortable with the topics. The challenges identified in the research were to develop sex education more appropriate for the students and ensure that teachers become more comfortable in communicating the topic with the students.

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[23] The first two perspectives represent traditional discourses in the field and they tend to (re)produce conservative understandings of sexuality and sexuality education. The third argument is developed as a critical response to the dominant, mainstream, and approaches.

[24] Some people have high expectations of the education system to deal with sexuality and what it can offer, and perceive it as a solution to a series of complex, persistent and multifaceted social issues. Yet, others point to the complexity of the phenomenon of sexuality, and underscore the fact that the education system can only be one of the sources of information and influence in young people's lives.

The main socio-cultural challenges to sexual health education for adolescents in Iran are the taboos surrounding sexuality (Roudsari et al. 2013). The emergent categories were as reported in the study: denial of premarital sex, social concern about negative impacts of sexual education, perceived stigma and embarrassment, reluctance to discuss sexual issues in public, sexual discussion as a socio-cultural taboo, lack of advocacy and legal support, intergenerational gap, religious uncertainties, and imitating non-Islamic patterns of education. In Dar Es Salaam city, the participants strongly supported that they should talk with adolescents about sexuality and reproductive health but their culture prohibited them from doing so (Mbonile and Kayombo 2008). They also supported that condoms could protect against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, but strongly opposed the use of condoms by adolescents because it would encourage promiscuity.

The issue of religious extremism in Bangladesh has become a subject of considerable public debate focusing largely on Islam as the main religion in the country. Geographical and strategic locations are fuelling the problem within its boundary. The rise of Islamic militant groups such as Jamiat ul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB)[25], the recently banned Hijbut Tahrir[26] and previously banned Hijbut Tawhid are examples of Islamic extremist groups and related influence in the country. There are ten religion-based political parties in Bangladesh (Barkat 2011) and many of them have student wings such as the Islami Chatra Shibir of Jamaet e Islam. The space is prevalent for these groups and their ideologies to permeate into people's lives, including the ability to influence decisions and practices around access to SRH related services and information.

> ❝The issue of religious extremism in Bangladesh has become a subject of considerable public debate focusing largely on Islam as the main religion in the country. Geographical and strategic locations are fuelling the problem within its boundary.❞

[25] Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a terrorist organization, that remains active and dangerous despite the decimation of its ranks in the past. JMB was founded in 1998 by Shaikh Abdur Rahman, a religious preacher educated in Saudi Arabia. The organization is suspected to be the youth wing of the Al Mujahideen, a group established in the mid-1990s whose existence remains obscure. The group campaigns for the imposition of the Shariah Law in Bangladesh through armed revolution. Despite being banned by the government, the JMB members are trying to regroup and launch clandestine operations. (''The Treat from Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh,'' Asia Report N°187, March 1, 2010, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/bangladesh/187_the_threat_from_jamaat_ul_mujahideen_bangladesh.ashx. ''Global Security.org,'' Jamatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB), http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/jmb.htm

[26] Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation) is a transnational Islamic religious-political organization which has presence over 20 countries across the world. HT was founded in Jerusalem in 1953 by Tokiuddin Al Nakhani. HT believes in the Ummatic concept. Its website openly declares that: "It aims to revive the Islamic Ummah from the severe decline that it had reached, and to liberate it from the thoughts, systems and laws of Kufr, as well as the domination and influence of the Kufr states. It also aims to restore the Islamic Khilafah State so that the ruling by what Allah revealed returns." The Bangladesh chapter of Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT-B) came into existence in 2000. Its objectives have been to establish the Caliphate as part of the "Khilafah Islamiyah". It also wants Judiciary to be controlled by Islamic Sharia laws. (''BANGLADESH -Audacity of Hope,' 'Hizb-ut-Tahrir Bangladesh: Transnational Movement) https://mygoldenbengal.wordpress.com/2014/02/27/hizb-ut-tahrir-bangladesh-transnational-islamist-movement/

3. UNDERSTANDING THE INTERLINKAGES

Positioning of Comprehensive SRHR Education in the Curriculum, Syllabus and Textbooks

Sexual and reproductive health information was included in 2013 in three textbooks of the secondary school curriculum (grades six to ten): 1. Physical Education and Health Science (mandatory), 2. Home Science[27] (optional), and 3. Bangladesh and Global Exposure (mandatory). With continuous technical support and collaboration from UNICEF and other national and international NGOs, the NCTB decided to include sexual and reproductive health information in the textbook on physical education and health, which previously dealt only with physical education. The main reason cited by the Board and National Curriculum Council (NCC) representatives[28] for not adding a separate textbook on CSRHRE and life skill education was not to burden students with another mandatory course.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education revised the curriculum and developed the textbooks in line with the National Education Policy. The aim of the National Education Polic (2010) is to adapt to the needs of the present times to build a knowledgeable future generation, and national tradition. This follows a "spiral process of executing knowledge" i.e. knowledge is shared in a process over a period of time where, at the end, complete information on the topic is considered to have been provided.

The textbooks[29] were provided to the students in 2013. The aim of this approach was to give a preliminary idea to the students of grade six to nine in an attempt to satisfy their curiosity.[30] The textbooks were approved by the National Curriculum Coordination Committee (NCC) on the basis of language, cultural sensitivity and age specific information.[31]

> ❝ **Some parents appealed to the Minister of the MOE to exclude the chapter on "Puberty and Reproductive Health" from the textbook "Physical Education and Health"** ❞

"Although Adolescent Family Life Education is meant to provide information on physical, mental, social and moral behavioural changes and development at different stages in their lives, keeping in mind the cultural context we could only touch upon (not in detail) puberty, menstruation, age of marriage, right age for pregnancy, problems of early

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[27] "Home Science" includes more information on bodily changes that take place during adolescence, on sexual harassment, etc. The course is usually taken by girls and as a result, boys are excluded from accessing the information available in the related material and classes.

[28] Raised during Key Informant Interviews with with the Board and NCC

[29] This was outcome of efforts of different committees (such as, Technical Committee, Professional Committee) that consist of subject specialists, curriculum specialist, class teachers, and representatives from NCTB, eminent educationists.

[30] Interview with curriculum specialist and member of NCC.

[31] Interview with curriculum specialist and member of NCC.

marriage, problems of early fertility, relationships, prevention and protection from HIV/AIDS, common Reproductive Tract Infections and Sexually Transmitted Diseases etc. Topics such as, sexuality, sexual and reproductive anatomy and physiology with body image, safe sex methods, etc. have been excluded."

NCC Committee member

Some parents appealed to the Minister of the MOE to exclude the chapter on "Puberty and Reproductive Health" from the textbook "Physical Education and Health".[32] They organised different initiatives (such as sit-ins, memorandum to the Minister) arguing that boys and girls do not need to know this information before they reach the legal age of marriage[33]. The teachers argued that this information would create an embarrassing situation for students and teachers in classrooms while teaching, specifically in co-education schools. Even senior officials of the ministry spoke to the media about their embarrassment of the "detailed" information in the chapter on puberty and reproductive health in school textbooks as, they claimed, these are not "culture- and age- specific". Later, the Ministry considered these complaints and revised the textbooks in the following years[34].

The Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board did not distribute the textbooks in 2013 because they cited a delay in getting the books from NCTB[35]. The Board edited the books using the Board's own editorial panel and modified some sections before it was distributed to students. For example, in 2014 picturesof adolescent girls and boys were replaced with girls wearing the hijab[36] and boys wearing the prayer cap[37] prior to distribution.

The review of text books for the 2014/2015 education year reveals that subjects such as physical and mental changes during adolescence, sexual harassment, puberty, and drug abuse have been discussed and presented in 'Physical Education and Health Science' and 'Home Science (for grades six to eight) and 'Bangladesh and Global Exposure' (for grade eight). The chapter titled "How to obtain help from parents and guardians during puberty" advises girls to ask their mothers what they should do when their first menstruation occurs. It is also suggested that when menstruation begins, girls should take special care of their personal hygiene by bathing every day, wearing clean dry clothes and using soft germ-free cloth or sanitary napkins. Boys are advised to consult their guardians (i.e.

Box 1: Sections Removed from the 2013 Edition of the Madrasah Textbook

- The physical changes that occur in boys (hair growth and ejaculation).
- The physical changes in girls, the onset of menstruation, thickening of the waist, buttocks and thighs and increase in the size of breasts.
- The psychological changes relating to puberty of boys and girls wanting attention, emotions, sexual intercourse and attraction towards the opposite sex.
- Diagram showing reproductive organs
- Information on the Convention of the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Source: NCTB officials, students, teachers

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[32] NCTB officials

[33] In Bangladesh, the legal age of marriage for boys and girls are 21 and 18 years respectively.

[34] Based on discussions with NCTB officials, educationists, and members of the committee.

[35] Interview with Curriculum Specialist, Madrasah Education Board.

[36] A veil that covers the head and chest, which is often worn by Muslim women beyond the age of puberty in the presence of adult males outside of their immediate family as a form of modest attire.

[37] A short and rounded skullcap. They are often worn for religious purposes; for example, Muslim men often wear them during the five daily prayers.

Box 2: Grade VII "Personal Safety during Puberty" Textbook Excerpts on Harassment

- Never stay home alone;
- Do not wear types of outfits that attract others;
- Avoid or even discard a person if/when s/he puts his/her hand on your body unwelcomingly;
- Do not go out alone with a person know or unknown to you;
- Should let parents know if you experience an unwelcome touch on your body by any person;
- Do not instantly react to the harassment towards you by any depraved group of persons and try to ignore them tactfully. Instead of threatening to throw sandals at them or slap them try tackling the situation wisely without scolding them loudly or creating anuproar.

Source: Home Science Textbook, Grade 8 (2015)

male/father) when they first experience ejaculation in terms of maintaining personal hygiene. Guardians are also advised to provide children with necessary information and mental support when they are in need. In relation to both these topics, reference is made to cleanliness and purity, which have religious connotations, citing actions that are related to the inability to engage in prayer, to fast or engage in any other religious acts as one is considered to be impure and unclean.The explanation does not touch on bodily changes and provide information on dealing with these changes as a natural process of the lifecycle.

Sexual harassment is discussed in the chapter titled "Personal Safety during Puberty" for students in grade seven and is defined as any action which constitutes "touching or striking with the hand or any other part of the body another person's body (especially parts that are clothed) with malafide intention". In the Home Science book for grade eight girls, the text focusing on preventing sexual harassment is mentioned (see Box 2 below). This information has a clear protectionist focus rather than a rights-based, gender equality and empowerment focus. The information focuses on girls needing to be protected, being passive, the need to limit attraction to the opposite sex for young people. It becomes important, hence, to reflect on where these perceptions stem from, and the source of justification for such perceptions and attitudes that are permeating into these textbooks. Culturally and religiously,

these attitudes on how the status quo should be are common, and clearly have an influence on how text is presented and how messages are delivered in textbooks.

In the grade eight textbook titled "Bangladesh and Global Exposure", it is stated that clean and wholesome avenues of entertainment must be made available to the children and adolescents so that they are not tempted to take drugs or indulge in other undesirable activities. At the same time, it notes that the exhibition of pornography and obscene films should be stopped. However, this text is merely presenting a viewpoint of extreme unacceptable behaviour of young people that is out of context. It does not include useful information sources that focus on the various stages of young people's lives, which in turn can help decision-making and affect their behaviour. This text also presents a pessimistic image of young people; they are seen as unable to control their behaviour and needing fear imposed on them toact as a deterrent to certain types of behaviour, rather than imparting education and providing information that is non-judgemental and empowering.

In the case of Madrasah education, besides the abovementioned textbooks, issues on SRH are raised from the religious perspective and drawn from religious texts and interpretations. For instance, menstruation, ejaculation, and sexual intercourse[38] are described as the reasons for not performing prayer, fasting, and other religious activities in

Islam. And as per the religious guidelines, people wishing to perform prayers, fasting[39], and/or conducting any other religious activities need to purify (paak) themselves by bathing or cleansing the body or body parts, following specific process and procedures. However, in case of the menstrual cycle, menstruation needs to end before women can perform the abovementioned religious activities. And after the cycle ends women need to "purify" themselves by bathing and cleaning body parts, following specific process and procedures. Furthermore, in rigid interpretations of Islam the only forms of sexual relations permitted are those between a husband and wife who are married and marriage is a contract that legitimises sexual intercourse.

On this basis, pre-marital, extra-marital and same sex relationships are forbidden and bringing in a rights based perspective cannot be advocated or taught to young people as it presents an alternative lifestyles or forms of behaviour that are considered sinful and culturally unacceptable (Halsteadand Lewicka 1998).

The chapters of the Madrasah textbook define engaging in sex, and sexual relations from the religious perspective and mostly focus on the behaviour of women. It relates to abstinence, preserving pre-defined ethics and morality, and stresses the need to carry out religious obligations. As stated previously, they focus on extreme behaviour rather than informing young people of being respectful to others including women, equality in relationships, safe sex practices and others that fall within the gamut of CSE.

Information related to HIV/AIDs is dated, discriminatory and incomplete, with a reference to same sex activity as the cause of transmitting HIV/AIDS. The advances that have been made in treating and preventing the disease have not been included in the textbook and is thereby not considered relevant or important. Instead, the presentation of information in a limiting matter is justified through the religious perspective and interpretation, and promotes religiously and culturally taboo and acceptable forms of behaviour.

Box 3: Madrasah Textbook Excerpt

HIV/AIDS disease spreads/contaminates in different ways like:
1. If two persons of the same sex engage intimately/in sexual intercourse, then they are infected by the AIDS virus;
2. By using instruments infected by the AIDS virus or if they have been used previously by HIV/AIDS infected patients, especially if they had cuts or injuries/wounds;
3. A child may also be infected if his/her mother was infected by the AIDS/HIV virus during her pregnancy, delivery or even during the lactation period;
4. Transfusion of blood contaminated with the virus.
Based on the inferences of the practical/empirical-data based research, the main reasons of HIV/AIDS are illegal/intimate mixing resulting from sexual intercourse. Thus, remaining aloof from those practices can ensure safety because, until now, the scientists have not been able to develop a cure or ways to manage this disease.

Source: Al Aqayed Wal Fiqh, Grades 9-10 (2015),Chapter 3, pp. 160-161

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[38] In Islam, the only forms of sexual relations permitted according to interpretation of the Quran are those between a husband and wife. Therefore, pre-marital, extra-marital and same sex relationships are considered to be forbidden and therefore, cannot be advocated or taught as alternative lifestyles or forms of behaviour (Halstead, J.M. and Lewicka, K. 1998).

[39] The practice of fasting in Islam is obligatory and entails abstaining from foods, drinks, smoking and sexual intercourse from sunrise to sunset, during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Exceptions of fasting include pregnancy, illness and during menstruation.

> " The chapters of the Madrasah textbook define engaging in sex, and sexual relations from the religious perspective and mostly focus on the behaviour of women. It relates to abstinence, preserving pre-defined ethics and morality, and stresses the need to carry out religious obligations. "

As stated earlier, SRH education is often dominated by discourses that are linked to health or moral dialogues, emphasising biological aspects and the negatives aspects of sex, such as teen pregnancies, disease, abuse, or violence. The review shows that the textbooks do not cover a discussion on emotions, feelings and relationships with significant others, even though incorporating relationships and such broader contexts are critical. Moreover, textbooks do not pay adequate attention to gender analysis and this disconnects SRH education from the socioeconomic and cultural context. Reproductive health continues to be viewed as a women's issue and incorporates a view that learning about it is only meant for women.

Reflection on textbook content by teachers, students and parents

The students, specifically boys irrespective of medium of education, are of the view that they knew "almost" everything about the topics taught using the textbooks. Their sources of information include the accessing the Internet and talking to peers. While it shows an availability of a range of information sources, the attitude of students is disconcerting as the material available online and from peers may not necessarily be accurate. There appears to be a notion amongst students that information available on the internet is sufficient and creating an environment that fosters engagement and discussion would not be beneficial.

"We find it amusing because we already know what the teacher is teaching since we read these parts as soon as we got the textbooks."
Male, 13-14 years, General Education, Grade Eight

The boys and girls[40] viewed the information they received from textbooks as insufficient and normative, and mainly focused on abstinence and married relationships. They also noted that they continue to receive information on these issues from both informal and formal sources, including family, peers, school programmes, media (print and electronic), and the internet. The spread of misinformation or information that is not scientifically based is a challenge. The discussion reveals that the girls of both education systems are less knowledgeable compared with boys. The boys, on the other hand, have relatively more exposure with peers and internet.

A student[41] said that their biology textbook explains how a human embryo is created as a result of the fertilization of a female ovum (egg) by a male sperm cell and babies are born. But what happens prior to this occurrence (i.e. sexual intercourse) is not described. This is another example of the acceptance of a certain level of information over others, including who has access to the information over others.

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[40] Male and Female, 14–16 years, General Education, Grades Nine to Ten.

Most of the students[42] said that textbooks of grades nine and ten nowadays contain more information than before. For example, previously there were no textbooks which dealt with topics such as physical and mental changes that take place during puberty, danger of taking drugs, etc.; but now even the textbooks of junior classes feature such topics.

> ❝ The boys and girls viewed the information they received from textbooks as insufficient and normative, and mainly focused on abstinence and married relationships. ❞

However, the students also shared that definitions provided for some topics are not helpful to clarify certain concepts. For instance, the definition of reproductive health is stated as " health issues of those organs which are directly related to reproduction". In the textbook for grade eight, pregnancy is defined as a condition which occurs when a female conceives. During sexual intercourse, when a male sperm succeeds in fertilizing a female ovum (egg), a baby is conceived in the female womb. During the first few months of pregnancy, it is common to experience some discomfort: vomiting, dizziness, frequent urination, enlargement of breasts, etc. In this context, the students in the grade eight said that only three pages of Physical Education and Health Science textbooks are devoted to discussing puberty but AIDS is discussed in detail. They also felt that the book is more focused on games and sports than information on puberty.

The girls in Madrasah education said that some of the topics were not detailed in the textbooks.

"In the book Fik'h of Madrasah Board, Niqah (marriage) has just been defined but not explained. However, woman reproductive health has been elaborately written on."
Female, 15 years, Aliya Madrasah, Grade Nine

Although it is believed that an alternative to SRH information being available in school is the information being available in the home, many parents are not accustomed to talking about SRH with their children. Followed by inclusion of information in 2013 textbooks, there was also resistance from the parents since they feared that knowledge of or discussion on sexuality might encourage young people to become sexually active, which they objected to. They noted this information to be unnecessary and harmful to an accepted way of life/lifestyle. A line of argument parents often use is that in their childhood this information was not available and they did not face any challenges in their lives. Improvement to technology and increased access to information sources as a result, is another line of argument used by parents. These statements point to the ignorance and lack of knowledge amongst adults and the need for education on these aspects to follow a life-cycle approach rather than focus on a set period in time.

"In our time (adolescence stage), we had no information about sex, but had no problems as well. Now, because of advanced information technology, the children have access to some electronic information."
Mothers of General Education students, Grades Eight to Ten

Almost all participants emphasized mutual mother-daughter intimacy as the most important factor in facilitating communication related to sexual issues, however, it was noted that sometimes mothers are also embarrassed to discuss sexual issues with daughters—raising shame and taboo factors in relation to this line of thinking. However, these sentiments also point to the role of partners/ spouses/fathers, or lack there of, in educating children and young people.

Few mothers agree that the students need to understand the nature of their developing sexuality. However, they are concerned how, by whom and when it should be offered. The lack of parent–child communication about sexuality and the negative views held by the parents on school-based sexuality education prevail in society.

As with many patriarchal practices, the role is considered the responsibility of the mother and not the father. She is seen as the main source of information regarding these aspects of young people's lives and adulthood. It is important to consider where the shame, fear and taboo factors come from. Cultural and religious teachings and practices do influence this mind-set and addressing the need for better quality SRH and sexuality education requires breaking down these barriers and dismantling patriarchal structures.

The material developers (writers) and teachers in Madrasah were against the use of condoms as a measure of prevention of HIV/AIDS and STIs[43]. Few teachers said that they had explained to female students to wear outfits, which were considered culturally appropriate to avoid verbal and sexual abuse from others[44]. Some teachers were not comfortable conveying this information to students[45]. The discussions with female students confirmed that they became puzzled and confused at this information and were unable to relate it to daily life and used logical reasoning to counter the views taught to them[46].

The school experts emphasised the need to include a number of concepts and topics such as physical and mental changes during puberty, sexual behaviour, sexuality, human rights, norms and peer influence on sexual behaviour, etc. in the secondary and higher secondary education curriculum so that complete information is provided and knowledge amongst young people who are in school can improve.

"It will be added gradually. . . Society is yet to get ready to accept all information to be taught in the school."
                                        Male and female officials in NCTB

"We are cautious after getting the experience of criticism and resistance from the guardians and teachers in 2013."
                                        Male and female officials in NCTB

"A comprehensive 'menu' cannot be covered in one text book (Physical Education and health Science)."
                                        Interview with Education expert

The notion from the experts is that this information cannot be included at once; and that society needs to accept it over the course of time is testament to the cultural implications and the backlash from society. Although they agreed that students of this age group should have access to information on SRH, they were, however, uncertain about the method of dissemination. The resistance to change is very real from a range of angles and stakeholders. This means that change can only come if there is an attitudinal change on the very basics of this type of education. And this change process cannot factor out the influence that culture and religion have on decisions to include topics and on teachers who cover them as part of the teaching routine.

Despite accepting the fact of necessity of sexual health education for the adolescents and the youth, there is a lack of consensus among the policy makers, parents, educationists and experts regarding the inclusion of SRHR education and method of disseminating the information. Perceived stigma and embarrassment, fear of loss of modesty and preserving the 'purity' within society, social concern about negative impacts of sexual education, reluctance to discuss sexual issues in public, sexual discussion as a socio-cultural taboo, lack of advocacy and legal support, intergenerational gap, religious uncertainties, and "imitating" non-Islamic patterns of education are thought to be the major factors of this difference.[47]

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[43] Curriculum specialist in Madrasah Education.

[44] Female teacher in girls' school in general education.

[45] Male and female teachers in co-education school in general education.

[46] Female students of grade eight in girls' schools and co-education schools in general education.

[47] Compilation from interviews and discussion with stakeholders.

Comprehensive SRHR Education in Secondary and Higher Secondary Education: Influence of Religious Extremism?

There was an attempt to understand how the CSRHR information was captured in the textbooks and how this is being taught in the schools and Madrasah. This was explored through consultation with the students, teachers and material writers.

Material Developers (Textbook Writers)

The material writers were consulted with an aim to know the background, rationale, and mechanism of including and excluding CSRHR issues in different chapters of the curriculum. According to them, they followed a life skill book for the adolescents developed by UNICEF and shared by NCTB to write, working on specific chapters of the textbooks. The writers of the textbook Physical Education and Health Science previously used to write on physical education only, and this new focus created some difficulty in articulating the information for the different grades. They did not have any orientation or training on how to write CSRHR information for the students keeping in mind gender-sensitivity.

Students

The case is different for students, who have an interest in learning about CSRHR but the lack of exposure affects their ability to grasp this information in a manner that is practical and useful. The majority of the students said that the teachers do not teach these topics in detail but ask them to read the chapters at home. In some cases, teachers only touch on the subject instead of going into details.

"I was very keen to learn about this subject, but when my teachers said this topic will not be covered in the exam, I got so disappointed."

Female student, 15 years, Grade Nine, General Education

A number of adolescent boys said that as the exam on Physical Education and Health Science carries only 50 marks, it is not considered very important to them[48].

" Despite accepting the fact of necessity of sexual health education for the adolescents and the youth, there is a lack of consensus among the policy makers, parents, educationists and experts regarding the inclusion of SRHR education and method of disseminating the information. **"**

The students also commented that their teachers did not work towards creating an atmosphere that would allow them to speak openly in the classroom on these issues—thus making it difficult to engage in any form of discussion and further examination of these issues in a safe environment. The students said that in the classroom, instead, they were discouraged from exploring for more information, asking questions and discussing with the teacher. Teachers glossed over the topic by telling students they would learn these in detail at a higher grade using other textbooks. There is also a notion that young people need to be protected from this information as they are too young to be exposed to the details. This could also be an approach of dealing with the embarrassment that teachers experience when they have teach these topics. However, it is important to consider the roots of this line of thinking and

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48 Male students, Grade Eight, General Education, Age: 14 years.

"The research reveals that the adolescents are generally reluctant to seek information about SRH from their parents, fearing their parents will assume they are engaged in forbidden activities."

"As stated earlier, SRH education is often dominated by discourses that are linked to health or moral dialogues, emphasising biological aspects and the negatives aspects of sex, such as teen pregnancies, disease, abuse, or violence."

acting and explore what influences this view and practice i.e. cultural and/or religious background and influence. It is also important to consider the temporal factor that these views and perceptions have been shaped over time, when teachers were young people themselves, and emerging from this process would require skills building and attitudinal change on many levels.

" Teachers glossed over the topic by telling students they would learn these in detail at a higher grade using other textbooks. There is also a notion that young people need to be protected from this information as they are too young to be exposed to the details. "

"When I asked Sir to explain the meaning of reproductive health, he smiled and told me to wait till I was older – till I was in Grade 9 or 10 – and then I would be better able to understand what it meant."
Female student, 14 years, Grade Eight, General Education

"Even though reproductive health is a part of the syllabus, teachers do not teach it in class. They say that it will not be tested and that it is an easy topic to study."
Female students, 12-13 years, Grade Seven, co-education school, General Education

"When we ask about sperm we were told to shut up and ask our biology teacher."
Male students, 13 years, Grade Eight, General Education

When boys asked questions regarding SRH the responses from the teachers and peers were not as hostile and aggressive in comparison to when girls asked questions. Girls are shunned and made to feel they have done something wrong. Teachers are not considered approachable and this affects the nature of the interaction and the how they engage with students.

''We have to obey the teachers in every respect, and there is a big gap between us. They are not our friends with whom we feel comfortable discussing any issue. How can you imagine I can get answers to my questions on reproductive health from them?''
Female students, 15-16 years, Grade 10, General Education

"When Miss (female teacher) explains terms such as spermatozoa, ova and chromosomes in science class, the students (specifically boys) do giggle and pollute the atmosphere in the classroom; but when the teacher is male with a strict attitude, the students listen silently."
Female students, 15-16 years, Grade 10, General Education

According to the students, female teachers find it harder to teach topics on reproductive health because they are taken less seriously than male teachers, who are considered to be stricter. It is a cultural and religious norm for girls to suppress their sexuality and this affects how girls are able to access this information as well as how female teachers are able to teach this topic.

"The teachers in Grade Eight, had previously (in grades six and seven) limited themselves to only reading the text out loud in the classroom, rather than teaching these issues more thoroughly as part of the regular lesson. They explain in detail the issues – such as how long menstrual periods should normally last, conjugal relations, and intercourse."
Female students, 15-16 years, Grade 10, Madrasah Education

However, when questioned by the students, teachers are not comfortable. For instance, questions on having sex

during menstruation. Some topics are considered taboo. For instance, discussions on adultery are not favoured citing that religious texts identify it as an offence. Homosexuality and issues of diverse sexuality as well as premarital sex and masturbation are also considered forbidden acts by religion. Homosexuality is presented as a perverse choice of an individual and a sin in Islam.

Boys are considered to know more than girls, including knowledge about the physical changes that take place in girls' bodies during puberty. Furthermore, there is a sense that some conditions on the basis of religion and culture apply only to girls and not boys, which is illustrative of broader structural influences of patriarchy. Teachers tell students that they would not face any problems if they abide by religious rules and regulations and follow social norms.

"We consider the guidelines in the Quran regarding sex and marriage to be relevant for men and women."
  Female students, 14-15 years, Grade Nine, Madrasah Education

"These rules to be relevant for girls and women only."
  Male students, 14-15 years, Grade Nine, Madrasah Education

In co-educational classes of general education, theteachersrefrained from discussing topics which, they felt, were not fit to be discussed in front of everyone; they preferred to restrict themselves to reading these aloud in the classroom and assign homework. However, the male teachers of Madrasah are not hesitant in teaching in co-education class. Some teachers find other ways of teaching by choosing other times and non-threatening/awkward environments to talk to students about various topics. However, the approach to teaching continues to be by drawing on religious arguments and interpretations and focusing on the expected and acceptable behaviour of girls as a result of their status of purity.

"We have learned this issue and also how to teach from our education institution, as a result, we do not feel uncomfortable."
  Male teacher, Co-education School, Madrasah Education

"During tiffin or other break time, a female teacher briefed us about the do's and don'ts during menstruation including not touching the Quran during menstruation but being able to read it."
  Female students, 14-15 years, Grade Nine,
  Co-education, Madrasah Education

Teachers

Teachers, who are expected to deliver these lessons using the textbooks, do not have specialised training. The requirement to teach this course is stressful, making them anxious and embarrassed. Their values, beliefs, traditions and practices add to the complexity of teaching these topics and this lack of belief in this information makes them hesitant. They feel they have to find other ways, such as one-on-one coaching or suggest that students learn the material themselves.

"How can I teach without putting at risk the credibility and legitimacy of my students' cultural knowledge and upbringing?''
  Male teacher, Boys' School, General Education

''Students of this generation learn fast. They are very curious and enthusiastic to know about these topics. We don't have to teach them, they already know more than what we are supposed to teach. There is no need to worry too much about this issue.''
  Female teacher, Co-education, Madrasah Education

Some teachers from the general education system are concerned about the implications of empowering their students with the knowledge. Many of them agreed to the importance of removing the "taboo" and stigma currently perpetuated by the absence of this knowledge area in the textbooks. To enable students to appreciate the perspective on these issues, they are aware that they have to address embedded cultural and religious views and that this may create conflict between students, parents and the senior management of the school.

"There is no environment for any kind of discussion, questions or answers during this class. All the girls have their heads down because they feel uneasy."

Female teacher (Grade 7), Girls' School, General Education

"I try to teach it thoroughly, but if I spend more time on this class, boys giggle and make sarcastic comments which later become difficult to control. That's why I complete this topic as quickly as possible."

Male teacher, Co-education School, General Education

"Another issue in SRH education relates to teachers' preparedness to teach and the influence their views, perceptions and experiences have on the material and teaching practice. When their own value structures contradict the values and rights promoted in comprehensive SRH education, their teaching is affected. "

The complexities are many. Teachers who did try to teach this class properly often faced obstacles, including lack of skills. Many teachers believe that it should be taught; however, they fear their peers will retaliate because the topics are considered to pollute young minds. Teachers suggest that sex segregation for these topics might be a way to move ahead. However, this option presents their own complications as they maintain the challenges that teaching this subject presents in the first place.If this method is to be used, it should be considered as a short-term solution and as a first step towards integrating boys and girls and moving towards ensuring a level of engagement that is accepted and encouraged. If not, patriarchal notions of gender relations will continue and influence actions.

Another issue in SRH education relates to teachers' preparedness to teach and the influence their views, perceptions and experiences have on the material and teaching practice. When their own value structures contradict the values and rights promoted in comprehensive SRH education, their teaching is affected. The same issue is applicable for the material writers. This limited approach reiterates the influence that belief systems have on actions and the religious connotations of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.

This is even more evident from discussions with teachers in Madrasahs. For them, sexual health issues are looked at from the religious and puritanical point of view. According to them, before offering prayers, reciting the Quran, and fasting, ensuring ones' cleanliness is obligatory for Muslims and students are taught how to clean themselves by performing wudu or ghuslbefore performing religious activities. This presents an avenue to discuss certain topics related to menstruation, ejaculation etc. as it has a purification focus. However, this teaching approach leaves out information beyond ensuring purity and this is problematic in terms of ensuring comprehensive sexuality education in its required form. It clearly does not take a human rights view but rather the view of ensuring purity of the person in the eyes of God. This approach to protecting young people from the risks that they are presented with due to a lack of adequate information is highly flawed and limiting.

Teachers also question the nature of rights-based information and practices within the contemporary sexual health education framework,and they noted that religious information tends to present the same behaviour as sinful.

"There are three main aspects of contemporary practice in 'comprehensive sexual health education' which contravene Islamic teachings and have therefore have become legitimate targets for Muslim opposition. These are: a) some sexual health education material offends the Islamic principle of decency and modesty (for example, demonstrations on how to use a condom correctly); b) sexual health education tends to present certain behaviour as acceptable (for example, 'boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, homosexuality) which Muslims consider sinful; c) sexual health education is perceived as undermining the Islamic concept of family life."

Vice principal, Co-education, Madrasah Education

This interpretation completely discounts the rights of an individual and the need for information to be able to make informed decisions and choices in life. It presents humans as believers who have very little choice beyond the revealed path to life. They are not to question and are only to abide by certain rulings. There is no space to question these ruling, no space equality and justice within this narrow interpretation of Islam, also making it difficult to question the rulings on equality and justice. By stating that the Quran and Hadith make it clear that sexual behaviour is not based entirely on a matter of "personal choice", but must be within the accepted forms of Islam, it is forcing people to adhere to one single interpretation, to accept without question and lead a life set out by a patriarchal and male-dominated viewpoint.

"The Qur'an and the life of Prophet Muhammad are open books for us. We've got all the answers to our questions in these books. So I think we have to go back to the Qur'an and Hadith, take what's in there and give it to our students."

Male teacher, Madrasah Education

" . . . In the class, what I do is to take ayat [verses] from the Qur'an and some Hadith and I say this is the theory. And then I read the ayat and I said in the Qur'an it mentions the egg and sperm as . . . so it's not something I have made up, it's not something that science has made up, its Allah's creation. Once they started to see the language, they felt at ease, that it's not wrong or forbidden to talk about it. And I think that's the way we have to do this here."

Male teacher, Co-education, Madrasah Education

"Using the Quran and Hadith would encourage students to view these texts as their first source of information and answers to their questions. I agree, these students need to know that they can get the information they want from the Qur'an and Hadith rather than different sites in the internet! There are some issues that are forbidden in Islam but they too have to be thought about, such as homosexuality. This information can come straight from the Quran . . . there's no better way to do it."

Female teacher, Co-education, Madrasah Education

In addition to the discussion above, a NCTB official felt that the book "Physical Education and Health Science" has been made compulsory without ensuring that there are enough qualified teachers for this subject. Out of the 18,700 schools in the country, 4,519 (24.2 per cent) do not have teachers for this subject.[49]

Improving teacher skills and ensuring regular training are critical enabling factors to integrate this material into the curriculum, also gaining teacher support for developing accurate content and ensuring positive impact. The teachers felt unprepared to undertake this role without training and emphasized the need for extensive training in delivering SRH information. The need to deliver the material in a culturally sensitive manner is not a contradiction. However, culture and religion cannot be allowed to influence the content that is presented and how it is taught to students. Teachers should be provided with options, including bringing in

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[49] NCTB official

others who have had more experience teaching these topics, so they can draw from this experience as well as by using teaching aids such as audio-visual material.

''It would be more informative if the school could arrange guest lecturers for this subject, such as an NGO person. I think they could explain this material more comfortably than teachers like us.''
     Female teacher, Co-education School, General Education

The teachers in Madrasah acknowledged the need for SRH education in the curriculum but note that it has to be based on Islamic teachings, principles and beliefs as outlined in the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic law (Fiqh) must be adhered to when making decisions about SRH education. They noted again, that the only permitted sexual relations are between a husband and wife and thus any discussion or material on sex before marriage, same sex relationships or amongst young people cannot be advocated, taught or included in any material. The continuous reference and focus on sexuality education and comprehensive sexuality education to include sexual relations and acceptable and non-acceptable forms of behaviour is indicative of the narrow understanding of this topic and what it should entail.

There is a need to adequately train the teachers to teach SRH issues but training alone will be insufficient unless it is coupled with changes in perceptions and the approach to teaching. Training requires not only knowledge about sexuality and reproduction, but also skills and competencies to stimulate discussion, open exchanges, communication and negotiation between teachers and students, and more importantly, between boys and girls. The judgmental attitude among teachers is a critical barrier to improving adolescents' access to information. Further, as is evident in this work, that the influence of culture and religion on the material development and delivery cannot be underestimated. Addressing the need for comprehensive sexuality education for young people requires tackling the influence that culture and religion has on these subjects and how they are delivered.

> **"There is a need to adequately train the teachers to teach SRH issues but training alone will be insufficient unless it is coupled with changes in perceptions and the approach to teaching. "**

Given the socio-cultural barriers, there is a need to change views of parents/guardians and teachers in the process of development, implementation and monitoring the SRHR education. The research reveals that the adolescents are generally reluctant to seek information about SRH from their parents, fearing their parents will assume they are engaged in forbidden activities. Thus engaging them is a critical component of change, including changing their views to be better source of information for young people. Parents also express that they may wish to discuss sexuality with their children but are not well prepared to do it. Orienting parents about sexuality and how to educate their children may improve sexual education among adolescents; however, this cannot be considered as an alternative to ensuring teachers are better equipped to teach appropriate material. Nor should the responsibility be seen as that of mothers, but rather a responsibility of parents and caregivers. Although sexuality education tends to be segregated in Islam (Ashraf 1998 and Noibi 1998), this is not a reason to ensure involvement of both parents and guardians.

4. CONCLUSIONS

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Although the youth population (defined here as 10–24 years old), including adolescents, comprise one-third of the country's population—48 million, their lack of access to basic needs including education is concerning. A considerable number of young people are out of school and the low rate of secondary educational attainment is evident of the need to address the challenges that confront education in Bangladesh.

Young people also suffer from negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Attitudes towards the type of information and access to sexual and reproductive health services that young people can have access to limits their rights and ability to make informed decisions about their lives. CSE provides young people with the knowledge, skills and efficacy to make informed decisions about their sexuality and lifestyle. However, barriers to adequate CSE for young people remain and the situation deserves further exploration in Bangladesh.

In recent times, Bangladesh has seen a rising influence of extremist ideologies and groups who are trying to use a stringent interpretation of Islam to influence decisions and rights. This research explored if religious extremism plays a role in the inclusion or exclusion of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights education (CSRHR) i.e. comprehensive sexuality education in the secondary and higher secondary education system. The research also explored associations that religious extremism might have with the teaching, learning and implementing of comprehensive SRHR education. In Bangladesh, despite policies for effective sex education, in reality outreach to young people including adolescents is limited. It used a qualitative methodology in order to engage in-depth with various stakeholders including students, parents, teachers and curriculum writers from secondary and Madrasah education institutions.

Evidently, the introduction of school-based CSRHR education in its present form in the national curriculum has contributed

to improving knowledge among the students to some level on selected issues. However, this does not discount the finding that the textbook content is limiting and is influenced by views, perceptions and attitudes of society at large. The context is also influenced by religious interpretation, and what people have been taught to be a certain religious interpretation. Further, the changing context and its influences on young people's views and lives are not considered. Instead, the need to preserve a certain worldview and belief system is given prominence.

The findings also point to how adolescents are viewed by adults—as being in need of protection, lacking agency and unable to make their own decisions. They are seen as passive beings, in need of information and skills to navigate a certain accepted way of life. Those who may want to live outside these accepted norms of behaviour have no space for existence—the message is that of conforming to socially accepted behaviour as opposed to accepting those who do not conform. SRH education programmes need to consider changes to content that encourage practices which foster equality, acceptance, ownership, empowerment and the need to be informed.

The development of a good curriculum requires an appropriate and rights-based implementation plan. The current approach of handing textbooks to teachers is insufficient and counterproductive. As with any other subject, teachers need teaching guidance on the one hand, but also the opportunity to tackle their own perceptions and views on the subject. They need to learn in order to teach others. The same is true for parents. Unless these challenges are tackled, the implementation stage will continue to be constrained by the reduction in the number of chapters, lack of skilled teachers and restrictions on content (e.g. having to teach only abstinence).

The education institutions give less or no priority to CSRHR and consider these getting in the way of teaching other

courses. These observations are similar to findings from other studies (Oshi DC, Nakalema S, Oshi L. 2005; 37: 175-183; Ott MA, Rouse M, Resseguie J, Smith H, Woodcox S.2011; 15: 169-177; Baraitser P, Wood A. 2001; 60: 127-131). However, according to Halstead and Reiss (2003), SRH education, like any other educational course, is a valuable activity. The CSRHR education in classrooms should create an atmosphere where young people feel free to discuss issues, as discussing sexual behaviour may also help break taboos concerning public discussion on sexuality. The creation of a safe atmosphere needs special attention, requires setting ground rules and ensures mutual respect. Evidently the purpose is more than providing knowledge on the biology; rather, encouraging skills, attitudes and specific behaviour and critical reasoning. The current approaches to sex education among students in Bangladesh are likely to fail.

An additional problem for sex education targeting Madrasah students seems to be the general reluctance to discuss sexuality. This reluctance to discuss sexuality seems to be related to the argument that questions and discussions about sexuality are useless because the Quran offers the guidelines that every Muslim should follow. In their view there was no need to ask questions or to look for answers other than those provided by the Quran. Since effective sex education programmes are based on active learning and participation and include group discussions and small group work, it is important to find strategies to solve this dilemma. Consequently, there is a real need to inform and prepare Muslim adolescents for their first experience with sexual intercourse. Future research should explore how Islamic views on sexuality can be integrated in comprehensive sex education, and whether promoting liberal interpretations of the Quran permitting contraceptive use and protective measures is a realistic option to educate Muslim adolescents about sexuality and safe sex practices. As observed in this study, a strong dilemma for such an approach concerns the tendency of some to deny and condemn opposing viewpoints.

Present sexual health education theory and practices not only clash with the teachers', parents' and students' moral and value perspectives on sexuality, but also with their sexual ideology. Both restrictive (abstinence-only) and permissive sexual ideologies compete for influence in shaping sexual health education. The permissive sexual ideology endorses many forms of non-procreative sex including masturbation

and oral sex, and accepts homosexuality as morally valid. The dominant influence of one sexual ideology can be both damaging and destructive to the students who do not identify with it. The contemporary approach favours assimilation into the dominant culture which can increase the risk of indoctrination. Therefore policy makers should be made aware that addressing issues of the observance of sexual norms is part of SRH education; this will, thus, reduce the public resistance to it.

CSRHR education incorporates discussions and negotiations of gender roles and expectations within societies and how they are displayed in sexual experiences. This requires interactions between girls and boys[50], in order for them to understand each other's perspectives and distinct experiences. The large part of existing sexuality values, attitudes, beliefs and practices directly or indirectly relate to gender issues. Hence, SRH education can largely benefit from discussions organised in mixed groups, which relate to cultural background and history of the relevant customs, what purpose they served in the past, how they evolved over time, and how boys and girls feel about the custom and the consequences of it. Critical, reflexive discussions on such topics can help young people to question their existing values, norms and practices, and provide new insights to each other's perspectives. Such attempts may promote open discussions to protect women, youth and children from sexual violence and abuse, and promote gender equality.

The results of the study revealed that the main socio-cultural and religious challenges to CSRHR in Bangladesh in the secondary and higher secondary schools are taboos surrounding sexuality. Cultural and religious resistances are both powerful factors. It is not always about religious extremism but about how religion is interpreted, and the lack of alternative interpretations and a counter narrative that can present these view and experiences.

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[50] Most of the teachers in General Education express their comfort and ease in communication with students of the same sex. For example, women prefer to teach girls and men boys. They are hesitant to teach SRH in a co-education system. They recommend providing separate classes for boys and girls.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

At the policy level

- Recognise at the policy level that education promoting SRHR of adolescents and young people is important, providing young people with the required skill-set that helps lead a safe and healthy life, and make informed decisions and choices.

- Ensure the success of the SRH education curriculum for the students by focusing on content, classroom learning strategies, and the establishment of a more collaborative working relationships between the various stakeholders, including teachers, students and the community.

- Ensure that young people have access to information on SRHR, to enable informed choices about how they live their lives and that they are able to stay safe.

- Ensure information is disseminated to all young people – across mediums and those who are in and out of school – including having adequate processes that ensure outreach to all groups.

- Develop policies that are reflective of the international commitments that Bangladesh is party to. These should be focused on considering and linking CSRHR to broader developmental issues rather than focusing on the taboo nature of sex.

- Build skills and change attitudes amongst teachers and curriculum writers to develop and deliver the curricula based on technical standards. This is essential for the success of the programme.

- Establish a professional learning team where the teachers are able to share a collaborative culture, interacting and working together to improve their teaching practices.

- Ensure collaborative action to come up with more realistic and cohesive policies for SRHR education through strategy consultation series and better content development.

For those, including civil society, engaging in programmatic work

- Build parental and community support for schools to provide SRH education.

- Develop acceptable terminology and language to discuss issues of sexuality and reproduction.

- Train teachers on how to teach this subject to students, involving local health workers and CSOs, so that the quality of the education is improved.

- Revise the content of the textbooks with a focus on gender, and present the information in a manner that is adolescent- and age-friendly.

- Include experts on Curriculum Development Boards, and orient writers, editors and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) officials on CSRHR, related concepts and content.

- Establish youth-friendly service centres that have accessible free services on CSRHR linked to the CSRHR education services.

- Engage all stakeholders including parents, teachers, journalists, and civil society to promote critical dialogue on Islam, SRH and its consistency with religious values.

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7. APPENDICES
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Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Aqayed: (Faith/belief) The matters which are known from the Qur'an and which the Muslim must believe in his/her heart, in acknowledgement of the truth of Allah and His Messenger.

Ayaat: A verse in the Quran.

Fatwa: It is an Arabic word, and it literally means "opinion". When a Muslim has a question that needs to be answered from an Islamic point of view, they ask an Islamic scholar this question, and the answer is known as a "fatwa". Muslim scholars are expected to give their "fatwa" based on religious rules, not based on their personal opinions. Therefore, their "fatwa"is sometimes regarded as a religious ruling.

Fiqh: The theory or philosophy of Islamic law, based on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet.

Ghusl: An Arabic term referring to the full body washing when ablution is required, when an adult loses the state of cleanness. Adults are required to take ablution (wudu) before performing various rituals and prayers. Ghusl is mandatory for any adult Muslim after having sexual intercourse, orgasmic discharge (e.g. semen), completion of the menstrual cycle, giving birth, and death by natural causes.

Hadith: The collections of the reports of the teachings, deeds and sayings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The hadith literature is based on spoken reports that were in circulation in society after the death of Muhammad. Islamic scholars compiled the hadith in collections.

Haraam: An Arabic term meaning forbidden. In Islamic jurisprudence, haraam is used to refer to any act that is forbidden by Allah (God). Acts that are haraam are typically prohibited in the religious texts of the Quran and the Sunnah.

Ibadah: An Arabic term meaning worship, adoration, obedience, submission, and devotion to Allah (God) along with the ultimate love for Him. Muslims believe that all people exist only to submit to Allah.

Niqah: In Islam,the niqahis a contractwhose main function is to legitimise sexual intercourse between a man and woman. Sexual intercourse outside the niqah contract constitute a crime of zina (illicit sexual relations), which is subject to punishment.

Purdah: A religious and social practice of female seclusion prevalent among Muslim communities as well as upper-caste Hindus in Northern India. It takes two forms: physical segregation of the sexes and the requirement that women cover their bodies so as to cover their skin and conceal their form.

Sharia: The revealed law of Islam as ordained by Allah (God) and revealed in the Quran and Hadith. It also refers to the path in terms of guidance by Allah.

Tajweed: Proficiency or doing something well.

Tawhid: It means attributing Oneness to Allah and describing Him as being One and Unique, with no partner or peer in His Essence and Attributes.

Wudu: The Islamic procedure for washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for formal prayers and before handling and reading the Quran. This is often translated as "partial ablution", as opposed to ghusl, or "full ablution". Muslims who are unable to perform the prevailing form of ablution due to skin inflammation, scaling or a disability, or if no clean water is available, are recommended to perform tayammum (the Islamic act of dry ablution using sand or dust, which may be performed in place of ritual washing (wudu or ghusl).

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)
comprises reproductive health, which is the ability to have a
responsible, satisfying and safe sex life, having the capability
to reproduce if, when and how one chooses. This includes the
right to be informed, having access to and choice of using
contraception, and to appropriate maternal health care
services that safeguards the mother and gives her the chance
of having a healthy infant (World Health Organization);
reproductive rights are human rights recognised in the
national laws and international human rights and consensus
documents that gives the opportunity for couples' and
individuals' to have the desired number of children when they
want to, access to adequate information and means to do so,
and the right to attain the highest standard of SRH. It
encompasses making reproduction decisions free of
discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human
rights documents (International Conference on Population and
Development); sexual health requires sexual health care to
enhance life and personal relations, counselling and care
related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases
(adapted from the United Nations); and sexual rights uphold
human rights as stated in national laws, international human
rights documents and other consensus documents and include
rights of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and
violence, to the highest attainable standard of health in
relation to sexuality, including access to sexual and
reproductive healthcare services; access to and availability of
information on sexuality, sexuality education; respect for
bodily integrity; choice of partner; sexual activity; consensual
sexual relations and marriage; decision to have/not to have
children; and pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual
life (WHO working definition)".[51]

Religious Extremism is the "rigid interpretations of religion
that are forced upon others using social or economic
coercion, laws, intolerance, or violence. It is accompanied by
non-fluid definitions of culture, religion, nationalism, ethnicity
or sect, which move citizens into exclusionary, patriarchal and
intolerant communities" (ICAN and AWID, 2014).

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[51] Thanenthiran S., Racherla S.J.M., and Jahanath S. (2013) 24
    http://www.arrow.org.my/publications/ICPD+20/ICPD+20_ARROW_AP.pdf

Appendix 2: Education System in Bangladesh[52]

The education system of Bangladesh is diverse as it provides a combination of native culture based education and the western education system. The present education system is divided in three major stages: primary, secondary and tertiary, with three streams: General, Technical/Vocational and the Madrasah education system. There is also a professional education system available for different professions i.e. Medical, Engineering, Law.

General Education Stream

From 1992, primary education is tuition free and compulsory according to the Compulsory Primary Education Act 1990 (http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en.html). The first level of education in Bangladesh comprisesfive years of formal schooling (class / grades one to five). Education, at this stage, usually begins at 6+ years of age up to 11 years. Primary education is generally provided by government and non-government primary schools.

The second level of education comprises seven years of formal schooling. The first three years (grades six to eight) is referred to as junior secondary; the next two years (grades nine to ten) is secondary while the last two years (grades eleven to twelve) is called higher secondary (http://www.banbeis.gov.bd/es_bd.htm). In secondary education, there are three streams of courses such as, Humanities, Science and Business Education, which start at grade nine, where the students are free to choose their course(s) of studies. The academic program ends at the end of grade ten when students are to appear at the public examination called S.S.C. (Secondary School Certificate). The Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Educations (BISE) conduct the examination.

The third stage of education comprises two to six years of formal schooling. The minimum requirement for admission is the higher secondary certificate (H.S.C). Higher education is

being offered in the universities and post HSC level colleges and institutes of diversified studies in professional, technicaland other special types of education. The HSC holders are qualified to enrol in 4-year bachelors' degree honours courses in degree level colleges or in the universities. After successful completion of a pass/honours bachelor's degree course, one can enrol in the master's degree course. Master's degree courses are of one year duration for honours bachelor degree holders and two years for pass bachelor degree holders.

A distinctive arena of general education is the system-cadet colleges which is a residential special type of school-cum-college established to produce students capable of leading the country. Military education is compulsory at Cadet College.

English medium schools are mainly private schools where all the courses are taught in English except one Bengali Language subject at Ordinary Level (O level). These schools in Bangladesh follow the General Certificate of Education (GCE) syllabus where students are prepared for taking their Ordinary Level (O level) and Advanced Level (A Level) examinations. These examinations are conducted under the supervision of the British Council in Bangladesh. The GCE examination conducted by the British Council takes place twice a year.

Technical – Vocational Education Stream

Technical – vocational education in Bangladesh is designed in three phases under two major levels of secondary and tertiary level of education. Vocational course starts from the secondary level. The certificate courses prepare skilled workers in different vocations starting from ninth grade after completion of three years of schooling in secondary school.

Madrasah Education

A unique feature of the Bangladeshi education sector is the large presence of Islamic institutions of religious learning, commonly known as Madrasahs. The Madrasah education system focuses on religious education, teaching all the basics of education in a religious environment. Islamic teachings are compulsory. Religious studies are taught in Arabic and the children also usually serve the related masjids. Students also

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[52] This section is mainly based on information from the website of the Ministry of Education of the Government of Bangladesh (moe.gov.bd)

study some or all of the courses from the general education system. Madrasahs take in many homeless children and provide them with food, shelter and education.

There are mainly two types of Madrasahs—Aliya and Quomi. Aliya Madrasahs offer primary to post-graduate level mixed education, mostly private (only three Aliya Madrasahs are government run) and are partly funded and supervised by the government. Quomi Madrasahs offer pre-primary to post-graduate level Islamic education; they are privately funded and stand outside government control. Aliya Madrasahs provide modern general education alongside Islamic education. These are most commonly private Madrasahs of which the majority are registered Madrasahs that operate with state funding.They are regulated in terms of curriculum content and teacher recruitment policy under a unified government recognized Madrasah Education Board. The government has been providing government grants to the teachers and employees of the non-government Madrasahs like other non-government education institutions (schools and colleges).

Hindu - Religious Studies: Bangladesh Sanskrit and Pali Board conducts a three-year course on Sanskrit and religious subjects. These subjects are Adhya in the first year, Madhya in the second year and Upadhi in the third year. Course subjects include the Sanskrit language, Prourahitta, Smriti (Hindu law) etc. The minimum requirement to be admitted in these courses is SSC. After completion of the three-year course, one can get the title Teertha. For each subject, the three-year course Adhya, Madhya and Upadhihas to be completed separately. The Bangladesh Sanskrit and Pali Board is an affiliated organization under the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

Buddhist Religious Studies: The system of Buddhist religious studies and the Buddhist religious language Pali are almost similar to that of Hindu religious studies.

Christian Religious Education: To meet the religious education needs of Christians in Bangladesh, there are Bible schools and intermediate seminaries which enrol students in the SSC; there are also major seminaries and theological colleges where students with HSC are admitted.

Management of Education

At the school level, in the case of non-government secondary schools, school management committees, and at the intermediate college level, in the case of non-government colleges, governing boards, formed as per government directives, are responsible for mobilizing resources, approving budgets, controlling expenditures, and appointing and disciplining staff. While teachers of non-government secondary schools are recruited by the school management committees observing relevant government rules, teachers of government secondary schools are recruited centrally though a competitive examination. In government secondary schools, there are no school management committees. The headmaster is solely responsible for running the school and is supervised by the deputy director of the respective zone. Parent–teacher associations, however, exist to ensure a better teaching and learning environment.

At the tertiary level, universities are regulated by the University Grants Commission. The colleges providing tertiary education are under the National University of Bangladesh. Each of the medical colleges is affiliated to a public university.

Appendix 3: Data Collection Checklists

Students' FGD Checklist:

Grade 6 and 7

1. Personal Information: Name of student, grade, name of school, number of siblings and names of their schools and the grades they are studying in.

2. Body-mapping (for identifying physical and psychological changes): Each student (boys and girls alike) will draw the outlines of their bodies on white or brown paper and insert their body organs (specifically reproductive organs) therein.

3. Do your school textbooks contain discussions on these organs? (List the names of the organs which are included in your textbooks.)

4. Do your textbooks include topics such as health, personal hygiene, HIV etc.? (If they do, then list the topics that are included with the names of the textbooks in question.)

5. Which of these topics do your teachers discuss in class and how do they do it?

6. Are there any topics which the teachers do not discuss and, if so, why? (If the facilitator concludes from the respondent's answer that religious limitation/bias influence the teachers' unwillingness to discuss some topics, he/she should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

7. Now tell us, is the information provided in your textbooks sufficient? If not, list what other information you think should be included.

8. Do you share this information with your family? If you do, with which of your family members do you share it and how? And if you don't, what are your reasons for not sharing? (If the facilitator concludes from the respondent's answer that religious limitation/bias could

be a reason for not sharing certain information, he/she should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

9. Have you obtained any information on these topics from any source or sources other than your class, textbooks or teachers? (List the sources.)

Grades 8- 12

In addition to 1 and 5–9 above:

1. There have been changes in your physical and mental state in the last three years. What are these changes and why have they occurred? (Make a list.)

2. You have already studied these topics in previous classes; is there anything new in your present textbooks, have these topics been discussed in more detail? (Make a list.)

3. Have these topics been included are discussed in any way in any other textbook (except NCTB's 'Physical Education' or 'Home Economics'?)

FGD Checklist for Parents:

1. Personal Information: Profession, number of children, names of their schools and the grades they are in.

2. How do you spend your spare time?

3. How do you deal with your children and how much information do they share on issues such as personal hygiene, menstrual periods, wet dreams etc.?

4. What are their reasons for not sharing? (For those parents with whom children do not share any information.) (If the facilitator feels that this is due to religious limitations/bias, he should make a mental note but he/she should not question the respondent directly.)

5. Do you know what is stated in your children's textbooks regarding these matters?

6. If you do, tell us what you know. How do the teachers discuss or explain these matters?

7. Why do you think teachers are unwilling to discuss these matters in detail? (If the facilitator concludes from the answer that religious limitations/bias could be a reason for the teachers' reluctance s/he should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

8. Apart from class, textbooks or teachers, is there any other source or medium from where your children can obtain such information? (If so, list the sources.)

9. Do you think your children need to know about these matters? If yes, list the specific topics that you feel the

   children should know about. (If the answer is no and the facilitator concludes that it may have been influenced by religious limitations, he/she should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

10. Are the topics on which information is imparted same for boys and girls or do they vary according to gender? (If the latter is the case and the reasons stated appear to have been influenced by religious factors, the facilitator should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

11. Regarding the contents of the textbooks, do you think that some new subjects should be added and/or existing ones deleted? (The facilitator should assess which factor or factors (e.g. religious limitations/bias) have predominantly influenced the respondent's opinion.)

FGD Checklist for Teachers:

1. Personal information: Name, educational qualifications, training, experience (In both present and previous schools).

2. How do you discuss these topics in the classroom? (Here the facilitator will mention specific topics (such as,

personal hygiene, menstrual periods etc.) and request separate answers for each.) (It should be mentioned here that some teachers feel embarrassed to talk about these matters with their students.)

3. If you feel embarrassed to talk about these matters, could you tell us why? (If the facilitator concludes from the answer that religious limitation/bias could be a reason, s/he should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

4. Have you taken any preparatory course or undergone any training to teach these subjects?

5. Do you think the topics in the textbooks are sufficiently comprehensive?

6. State the reasons for your answer. (If the facilitator feels there is any religious reason/bias behind the answer, he/she should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

7. Apart from textbooks, are there other sources from where the students can obtain information on these matters? (If so, list the sources.)

8. Do you think the students need to know about these matters? If yes, list the specific topics that you feel they should know about.

9. If the answer to the previous question is no and the facilitator concludes that it may have been influenced by religious limitations/bias, he/she should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.

10. Are the topics on which information is imparted same for boys and girls or do they vary according to gender?

11. State the reasons for any difference. (If the reasons stated appear to have been influenced by religious factors/bias, the facilitator should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

12. Regarding the contents of the textbooks, do you think that some new subjects should be added and/or existing ones deleted? (The facilitator should assess which factor or factors (e.g. religious limitations/bias) have predominantly influenced the respondent's opinion.)

13. Did you ever discuss these matters with your own children after they reached puberty?

Interview with Textbook Author/Writers

1. Personal information: Educational qualifications, training, experience as a writer.

2. Information regarding the process followed in writing a particular chapter (contractual instructions/stipulations, reasons for being selected for this writing assignment, details of any preparatory training/orientation and reasons for including the chapter in question in the textbook.)

3. In your opinion, how helpful is the inclusion of these topics to children of this age group?

4. If you think it is not helpful at all, state the reasons for your answer. (If the reasons appear to have been influenced by religious factors/bias, the facilitator should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

5. Upon review, has any chapter in the book been excluded or any new chapter added? (Please discuss in detail.)

6. If such has been the case, what, in your opinion, may have been the reason? (If the facilitator feels there was any religious motive/bias, s/he should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

7. Apart from the textbooks, is there any other source or medium from where students can obtain information on these topics? (Please make a list.)

8. Are the topics on which information is imparted same for boys and girls or do they vary according to gender? (If the facilitator feels that the answer has been influenced by any religious factor/bias, s/he should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

9. Regarding the contents of the textbooks, do you think that some new subjects should be added and/or existing ones deleted? Is there any scope for including these topics in any other textbook (that is, apart from Physical Education and Home Science)? If so, how?

10. If not, why? (If the reasons appear to have been influenced by religious factors/bias, the facilitator should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

11. If you are given the opportunity to revise this chapter, would you exclude any part or add anything new? State your reasons if your answer is yes. (Please explain with examples.)

Interview with Representative of Curriculum Committee, NTCB, Madrasah Education Board

1. Personal information: Name, educational qualifications, training, professional experience.

2. Information regarding the process of identifying and finalizing which textbook should include which chapters, considering the nature of the contents of each chapter. (The progression from curriculum to syllabus to textbook, the procedure for selection of writers and the orientation process should all be explained in detail. The facilitator should assess whether religious limitation/bias has played any part in this entire process but he/she should not question the respondent directly.)

3. Have any new topics been added or existing ones deleted from any particular book or chapter? (The facilitator should assess whether religious limitation/bias has played any part in any addition or deletion but he/she should not question the respondent directly.)

4. Apart from the textbooks, is there any other source or medium from where information on these topics can be obtained? (Please make a list.)

5. Are the topics on which information is imparted same for boys and girls or do they vary according to gender? (If the facilitator feels that any religious factor/bias is working here, he/she should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

6. Regarding the contents of the textbooks, do you think that some new subjects/topics should be added and/or existing ones deleted? Is there any scope for including these topics in any other textbook (that is, apart from Physical Education and Home Economics)? If so, how?

7. If not, why? (If the reasons appear to have been influenced by religious factors/bias, the facilitator should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

8. Do you think that the textbooks should be revised (possibly for next year) to include some new topics and/or delete some existing ones? (If the facilitator concludes that the respondent's answer may have been influenced by religious limitation/bias, s/he should make a mental note but should not question the respondent directly.)

Appendix 4: List of institutions and Organizations Contacted

1. Ideal School and College, Motijheel, Dhaka

2. Rayer Bazar High School, Dhaka

3. Rajuk Uttara Model School and College, Dhaka

4. Government Laboratory High School, Dhaka

5. Gausia Islami Fazil Madrasah, Dhaka

6. Gausia Islami Fazil Madrasah, Dhaka

7. Gausia Islami Fazil Madrasah, Dhaka

8. Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, Dhaka

9. State University of Bangladesh

10. University of Rajshahi

11. Department of Women & Gender Studies, University of Dhaka

12. Department of Anthropology, University of Rajshahi

13. Home Management and Housing Department, Home Science University College, Dhaka

14. Dhaka School of Economics

15. Brac Institute of Governance and Development

16. Brac University

17. Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Education

18. Secondary & Higher Secondary Education Department, Ministry of Education

19. Research Department, National Curriculum and Textbook Board

20. Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, Dhaka

21. Ministry of Planning

22. Mum's Institute of Fistula & Women Health, Dhaka

23. Concerned Women for Family Development

24. Swiss Contact

25. Save the Children

26. Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

27. Engender Health Bangladesh

28. ManusherJonno Foundation

29. Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha (BNPS)

30. Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE)

31. Centre for Population, Urbanization and Climate Change

32. Plan International Bangladesh

Appendix 5: Reviewed Text Books by Medium of Education

1. General medium					
Subject/ Class	6	7	8	9-10	11-12
General Science	Session 2014-2015	Session 2015	Session 2014-2015	Session 2014-2015	-
Bangladesh and Global Identity	Session 2014-2015	Session 2015	Session 2014-2015	-	-
Physical Education and Health	Session 2014-2015	Session 2014-2015	Session 2013-2014-2015	Session 2014-2015	-
Home Science	Session 2013-2014-2015	Session 2013-2015	Session 2013-2014-2015	Session 2013-2014-2015	-
Biology	-	-	-	Session 2015	Session 2014-2015
2. Madrasah medium					
General Science	Session 2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	-	-
Bangladesh and Global Identity	Session 2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	-
Physical Education and Health	Session 2014-2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	-
Home Science	Session 2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	Session 2015	-
Biology	-	-	-	-	Session 2014-2015
Fikah (part 1-2)	Session 2014-2015	Session 2014-2015	Session 2014-2015	Session 2014-2015	Session 2014-2015

3. English Medium	
Ordinary Level	Advanced level
BIOLOGY Matters, Lam Peng Kwan, Eric Y K Lam	Advanced Biology, Michael Kent
Science for you: Biology, Nick Paul	
Target Science: Biology, Foundation Tier, David Coppock	
New Coordinated Science, 3rd edition, BIOLOGY for Higher Tier, Marie Gallagher	
Biology course, Lam Peng Kwan, Eric Y KLam	
4. Cambridge	
Complete Biology for IGCSE, Ron Pickering	Biology, Second edition, Mary Jones, Richard Fosbery, Dennis Taylor, Jenifer Gregory
IGCSE Biology, Second edition, D.G. Mackean	Biology, 3rd Edition, Mary Jones, Richard Fosbery, Dennis Taylor, Jenifer Gregory
IGCSE, Biology, Course Book, second edition, Mary Jones and Geoff Jones	
5. Edexcel	
IGCSE, BIOLOGY for Edexcel, Collins and Edexcel IGCSE Biology, Phil Bradfield, Steve Potter	Biology for AS, C J Clegg
	Edexcel A2 Biology, Ann Fullick and Edexcel AS Biology, Student book

ARROW is a regional and non-profit women's NGO based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Since it was established in 1993, it has been working to advance women's health, affirmative sexuality and rights, and to empower women through information and knowledge, evidence generation, advocacy, capacity building, partnership building and organizational development.

Naripokkho is a membership-based woman's activist organization working since 1983 for the advancement of women's rights and entitlements and building resistance against violence, discrimination and injustice. A major portion of its activities are voluntary and financed through resources that are earned by the membership. Naripokkho works on the following five inter-related thematic areas: Equality and the Political Empowerment of Women; Violence Against Women (VAW) and Women's Human Rights; Women's Health and Reproductive Rights; Communal Harmony; and Women's Economic Rights.

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